

17/8

**MY VISION FOR RURAL HEALTH IN THE 1990S**

**BY**

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**PRESENTED TO**

**THE NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

**13TH NATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

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**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA**

*to corrected  
on C. Koop  
this is present  
copy*

**I AM PLEASED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE A PART OF THE  
NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE.**

**I AM SORRY I WAS NOT ABLE TO ACCEPT YOUR INVITATION TO  
SPEAK TO THE CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON TWO YEARS AGO.  
ACTUALLY I WOULD PREFER TO BE IN NEW ORLEANS.**

**WHEN I ACCEPTED YOUR INVITATION LAST FALL I FELT AN INTELLECTUAL BOND TO YOUR CAUSE, BUT DID NOT KNOW A LOT ABOUT IT.**

**SINCE THAT TIME I HAVE WALKED THE LONELY ROADS OF APPALACHIA, I HAVE VISITED SICK CHILDREN, VISITED WITH RURAL ADULTS, AND TALKED TO WORRIED AND OVERWHELMED HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.**

I HAVE SEEN THE FACE OF RURAL POVERTY, I HAVE SEEN THE  
GROWING <sup>S</sup>LOSE OF THE CAPACITY AND LOSS OF PUBLIC  
CONFIDENCE IN LOCAL HEALTH CARE ~~TO~~ DELIVERY.

MY INTELLECTUAL BOND WITH YOU AND YOUR RURAL  
CONSTITUENCY IS NOW AN EMOTIONAL BOND, AS WELL.

**I NOW FEEL AN EMOTIONAL BOND WITH YOU AND YOUR RURAL  
CONSTITUENCY. WHILE I AM APPALLED AT THE LEVEL OF NEED FOR  
ALL HUMAN SERVICES IN OUR RURAL AREAS, MY HEART IS WARMED  
AT THE STRENGTH, COURAGE, AND HOPE OF OUR RURAL CITIZENS.**

**I HAVE KNOWN WHAT NRHA DOES FOR SOME TIME. NOW I KNOW  
WHY IN A VERY PERSONAL WAY.**

**IN THE LAST YEAR NRHA HAS BLOOMED INTO MATURITY.**

**YOU HAVE BECOME A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH AS AN  
INTEREST GROUP PROMOTING THE HEALTH AND WELL BEING OF  
RURAL PEOPLE.**

**YOU HAVE COME A LONG WAY FROM THE LITTLE BAND OF  
FEDERALLY ASSISTED RURAL PROJECTS OF THE MID-1970'S.**

**YOU HAVE ALL THE ELEMENTS OF A MATURE ORGANIZATION. *YOU*  
*HAVE* FOUNDING FATHERS: DAVID FENTON, MIKE SAMUELS, JOHN CLARK,  
JOHN LACASE.**

**YOU EVEN HAVE YOUR MARTYRS: LOU GORIN, FOR WHOM YOUR  
HIGHEST AWARD IS NAMED, TERRY REILLY, FOR WHOM THE  
MEMORIAL LECTURE IS NAMED.**

**A VERY RICH HISTORY INDEED WITH A CLEAR TREND OF  
DIVERSIFICATION TO INCLUDE ALL CONCERNED GROUPS.**



**YOU MERGED WITH THE AMERICAN RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION TO  
ADD AN ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH COMPONENT AND THE JOURNAL  
OF RURAL HEALTH, TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE.**

**I COULD CONTINUE,**

**BUT THE POINT IS THAT YOU HAVE ACHIEVED A DIVERSITY THAT  
MIRRORS THE RURAL AMERICA FOR WHICH YOU ARE ADVOCATES.**

**THE COALITION YOU HAVE BUILT CUTS ACROSS MORE NARROWLY  
FOCUSED INSTITUTIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS.**

**MUCH OF THE CREDIT FOR YOUR SUCCESS MUST GO TO YOUR  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BOB VAN HOOK.**

**WHEN HE ASSUMED HIS POSITION AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THIS  
ORGANIZATION WAS ON THE CRITICAL LIST. HE BROUGHT YOU OUT  
OF THE ICU, YOU HAVE RECOVERED AND ARE POST  
REHABILITATION.**

**ON YOUR BEHALF HE HAS BUILT NRHA INTO A STABLE  
BROAD-BASED ORGANIZATION OF NEARLY 2000 INDIVIDUAL AND  
INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS AND A WELL DIVERSIFIED BUDGET OF  
OVER \$1.5 MILLION .**

**THIS STRONG COALITION OF PRIMARY CARE CENTERS, HOSPITALS,  
CLINICIANS, ACADEMICS, RESEARCHERS, AND COMMUNITY PEOPLE  
HAS SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGED THE POLITICAL PROCESS.**

YOUR FRIENDS INCLUDE, AMONG OTHERS, SENATORS HARKEN,  
BYRD, HOLLINGS, DURENBEGGER, DOLE, PRESIDENT CARTER, AND  
VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE.

**YOUR ALLIES INCLUDE THE ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS, THE  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSE PRACTITIONERS, AND THE  
AMERICAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION, AND NOW ME.**

**YOUR CONFERENCE THEME "EMPOWERED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
" REFLECTS THE CAPACITY YOU AS THE NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION HAVE BUILT OVER THE LAST THIRTEEN YEARS.**

**YOU ARE EMPOWERED, INDEED !**



**LAST YEARS SENATE APPROPRIATION LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT WAS CALLED " THE RURAL CHRISTMAS TREE ".**

**AND YOU HAVE CONSISTENTLY SCORED WELL FOR RURAL HEALTH INTERESTS IN THE PAST THREE BUDGET RECONCILIATION BILLS.**

**YOU HAVE INFLUENCED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FEDERAL OFFICE  
OF RURAL HEALTH POLICY AND ARE FORTUNATE TO NOW HAVE  
JEFF HUMAN AS A STRONG VOICE FOR RURAL HEALTH INSIDE THE  
BUREAUCRACY.**

**WITH EMPOWERMENT COMES THE STEWARDSHIP AND ALL THE  
RESPONSIBILITIES THAT GO WITH IT.**

**HOW CAN YOU BEST SERVE RURAL AMERICA ?**

**SO OFTEN MATURE MOVEMENTS PERPETUATE SELF SERVING  
POLICIES AND FORGET THAT IT IS NOT THEMSELVES BUT A  
CONSTITUENCY THAT MUST BE SERVED.**

**CLEARLY YOU HAVE DONE A GREAT DEAL TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON  
THE HEALTH NEEDS OF THE RURAL POPULATION.**

**YOUR CONTINUING LEADERSHIP TASK IS TO FORMULATE AND  
REFORMULATE A COLLECTIVE VISION FOR THE HEALTH OF RURAL  
AMERICA.**

**MY ASSIGNMENT FOR TODAY IS TO THINK ALOUD WHAT THAT  
VISION LOOKS LIKE FOR THE 1990'S.**

*ADDRES)*

**IN THINKING ABOUT THIS ~~SPEECH~~ I WONDERED, WHAT CAN I  
CONTRIBUTE ?**

*BROOKLYN*

I WAS BORN AND GREW UP IN ~~NEW YORK CITY~~ AND LIVED MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE IN URBAN PHILADELPHIA.

AS YOU KNOW, HOWEVER, RURAL IS A STATE OF MIND AND BESIDES MY HEART WAS ALWAYS IN RURAL ~~HEALTH~~ NEW HAMPSHIRE. AMERICAS' SOUL HAS DEEP RURAL ROOTS.

**LIKE JEFFERSONS' DREAM OF A NATION OF SMALL FARMERS, AND  
THE LURE OF THE 1/4 SECTION OF LAND (160 ACRES) THAT  
BROUGHT OUR LANDLESS PEASANT ANCESTORS FROM EUROPE,  
OR THE DREAM OF "40 ACRES AND A MULE " THAT ENTICED SLAVES  
RECENTLY FREED TO HOMESTEAD AFTER THE CIVIL WAR,**

**RURAL AMERICA PROVIDES THE BREAD FOR OUR TABLES, THE FUEL FOR OUR CARS, AND THE WOOD FOR OUR HOMES, AND INCREASINGLY, THE SMALL MANUFACTURED PARTS THAT MAKE MOST THINGS GO.**

**PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION OF RURAL AMERICA, HOWEVER, IS ITS VALUES OF RESPECT <sup>For</sup> ~~OF~~ OUR PRECIOUS FARMLAND, AND AN UNQUESTIONED BELIEF IN THE FUTURE.**

**THE AMERICAN DREAM AND THESE HEADY, SOMEWHAT ROMANTIC  
THOUGHTS DON'T SQUARE WITH MUCH OF WHAT I SEE AS THE  
REALITY OF MODERN RURAL AMERICA.**

**BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THESE THOUGHTS DO BIND  
TOGETHER THOSE WHO COULD HELP CHANGE IT FOR THE BETTER.**



**I WILL FIRST PREACH TO THE CHOIR AND OUTLINE WHAT I BELIEVE  
ARE SOME MAJOR RURAL ISSUES, SOME IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS  
THAT COULD BE TAKEN.**

**AND THEN CONCLUDE WITH SOME BROADER VISIONS OF DESIRABLE  
CHANGE.**

**A MAJOR ISSUE AND THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE CURRENT  
SUPPORT FOR RURAL HEALTH IS THE THREAT TO THE CONTINUED  
EXISTENCE OF SMALL RURAL HOSPITALS.**

**THE CLOSURE OF A RURAL HOSPITAL MARKS MORE THAN A LOSS  
OF HEALTH CARE CAPACITY FOR THE COMMUNITY.**